

NNewsline

Revitalize Neighborhood Networks Centers with Fresh, Dynamic Programs

Change may be inevitable, but how to deal with it presents a host of issues.

That is the challenge now faced by Neighborhood Networks centers that started back when the initiative began almost five years ago. Today, these same centers may face a new hurdle: how to adapt programs to meet the changing needs and interests of residents, a dynamic job market and ever-changing technology.

For this article, operators of some of the oldest Neighborhood Networks centers share their strategies for responding to change.

Be flexible. Flexibility makes change easier. Look for ways to navigate hurdles while still achieving goals. For instance, at the **Martin Luther King, Jr., Apartments Community Technology Center** in Seattle, WA, Elridge Morgan explains that not all interested residents could attend GED preparation classes at the scheduled times. For others, the pace of instruction was either too fast or too slow. To respond, the center implemented self-paced, computer-based GED instruction.

Plan for the future. This is an important tip from Mamie Rytter, Coordinator of the **LaGrave Learning Center**, Grand Forks, ND. She advises that it is easy to concentrate on day-to-day center operations, but it is important to be forward-thinking. Staying in close contact with the local community and looking at least a year down the road will ensure vitality in center programs. Rytter suggests that having to write about future goals in the annual report spurs center staff to look ahead.

Be knowledgeable about the local job market and offer programs that cater to local employers. Despite the initial popularity of computer graphics classes among

residents at the **Versailles Arms Computer Learning Center** in New Orleans, LA, Director Antonio Gibson explains that more classes are now offered in word processing, spreadsheets and other in-demand office software. Without straying from the main focus of providing computer classes to residents, the center has modified its course selection by offering classes that appeal to residents and better prepare them for existing jobs in banking and customer service.

Establish partnerships and let the experts do what they do best; instead of trying to stay on top of recent developments in different fields such as health, education, job training and parenting classes, partner with community-based organizations that have expertise in specific areas. The centers' partnerships with experts gives residents access to the best services available. In addition, partnerships will prevent centers from stretching their resources too thin.

For more information, call the **Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at 888-312-2743** or visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

Networking in Your Neighborhood! Come to RTAP!

Hundreds of people nationwide have taken advantage of the opportunity to learn and network at the Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Project (RTAP), a series of workshops aimed at building center success. RTAP has focused on a broad range of topics, including center administration, fund raising, program development and resident relations. Watch the Web site for information on potential future RTAP workshops!

NNewsline

Welcome to *NNewsline*. Each issue of *NNewsline* focuses on a topic relevant to Neighborhood Networks centers. The theme of this issue of *NNewsline* is Program Development.



Neighborhood Networks

U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development

Consortium: Networks of Neighboring Centers

As Neighborhood Networks centers band together to form consortia across states and counties, center staff are beginning to see benefits.

A consortium is a group of Neighborhood Networks centers and partners whose purpose is to support and provide assistance to area centers. Consortia help new centers learn from existing ones, said Carol Strayer, HUD's Florida Neighborhood Networks Coordinator who has worked with two Florida consortia. And according to the Washington State Neighborhood Networks Consortium President, Mark Flynn, they also serve as funding channels for centers. For instance, the City of Seattle awarded technology grants to the consortium. Grants were then redirected to Neighborhood Networks centers.

Here are some Neighborhood Networks consortia now operating:

- **Arizona:** Arizona Neighborhood Networks Partnership
- **Florida:** Foundation for Learning and Success (Escambia County)
- **Florida:** Tallahassee Foundation for Learning and Success, Inc. (Leon County)
- **Ohio:** Columbus Neighborhood Networks Consortium
- **Texas:** Houston Neighborhood Networks, Inc.
- **Washington:** Washington State Neighborhood Networks Consortium

For more information on how to form a consortium or other consortia questions, call the **Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743** or visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at

www.neighborhoodnetworks.org.

KIDS' CORNER

Kids Enter ThinkQuest Jr. 2000 Contest

Children at several Neighborhood Networks centers around the country are taking advantage of the recent partnership with the ThinkQuest organization (www.thinkquest.org) and participating in ThinkQuest Jr. 2000.

Designed for fourth, fifth and sixth graders, this innovative program helps youngsters create educational Web pages that will become learning resources for other children and teachers around the world. ThinkQuest makes the content of more than 1,000 student-authored sites available on the Internet.

At the **High Point Village Neighborhood Networks Center** in Roslindale, MA, youngsters are creating Let's Dance Latin Style, a Web site that traces the origin of different Latin American dance forms and music, and their introduction to the United States. Students used the Internet, books and interviews to conduct their research.

For information about participating in the ThinkQuest Internet Challenge program for youth ages 12-19, contact **Carlin Llorente at cllorente@neighborhoodnetworks.org or (617) 618-2736**.



Dentist James Johnson, D.D.S., of the South Baltimore Family Health Center (SBFHC) provided free dental screenings for residents during the first partnership event on October 30, 1999 between a Bureau of Primary Health Care-funded community health center and Neighborhood Networks.

Partnership News

New Partnership Created to Improve Health

A new national partnership between Neighborhood Networks and the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) is aimed at improving the health and well-being of low-income children, adults and seniors in communities around the nation. The national partnership paves the way for partnerships between local Neighborhood Networks centers and clinics associated with the BPHC. The local partnerships will provide access to preventive care, early intervention and workshops on health care topics to residents. BPHC is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration.

Already, five Neighborhood Networks centers from around the country have developed partnerships with local community health centers.

For example, the Neighborhood Networks center at **Cherrydale Apartments** in Baltimore, MD, recently formed a local partnership with the South Baltimore Family Health Center, a BPHC clinic. To kick off the partnership, the two organizations hosted a festive Halloween-style "Cherryween" health fair. Amidst the fun, more than 150 residents and community members received free dental screenings, as well as valuable information on childhood immunizations, substance abuse, health issues, and the state children's health insurance program.

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Creative Programs Keep Centers Busy

If variety is the spice of life, then there's a lot of spice at Neighborhood Networks centers across the nation. Centers participating in Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Project workshops got a taste of what's happening. Here is a sampling of the diversity of programs available at Neighborhood Networks centers.

- Boston's **Kent Computer Learning Center** will join ThinkQuest, an educational initiative advancing learning through the use of computer and networking technology. At the center, teams of children learn how to create their own Web site by incorporating important science and mathematics concepts into Web site technology.
- In Jacksonville, FL, the Department of Juvenile Justice supports a unique club for youths at the **Emerson Arms Center** where children participate in weekly spelling bees, quiz games and math projects, and learn how to become a role model or volunteer.
- At the **Jewish Vocational Service Center** in East Boston, residents have been working on poetry, short stories, and artwork to include in their own newsletter. The center also holds a monthly contest featuring question-of-the-day trivia, which students research on the Internet.

New Center Offers Tips on How to Get a Program Off the Ground

New centers in Montana and South Dakota have expanded the Neighborhood Networks initiative to other HUD-assisted housing properties across the country.

The newest centers are located at **Highland View Manor**, Butte, MT, which houses seniors, and **Lakota Community Homes I and II** in Rapid City, SD, which primarily serves Native American families.

The success of Neighborhood Networks computer centers at other properties, and particularly among properties housing the elderly, was the reason that center planners at the Highland Manor property established a computer program there. The average age of its 60 residents is 72.

According to Frank Lombardi, Facility Director at Highland View Manor Neighborhood Networks Center, the local HUD office in Helena, MT, helped center organizers reach the broader Butte community of 38,000 for contributions of computer hardware, software, furniture and furnishings. "We had 25 companies respond," Lombardi said. Among those responding to the call for equipment and services were businesses, the local hospital and a college. The local college, one of the providers of computer instruction, developed an internship program for students who teach the seniors how to use a computer to access information.

"My belief is that a program must be resident-driven. They have to clearly want the service and there has to be a nucleus of resident support."

— Dick Brinck,
Montana HUD Senior Community Builder

Dick Brinck, HUD Senior Community Builder with the Helena office, explained that a smaller office like his, in a relatively rural community, can play a role in program development. In the case of Highland View Manor, Brinck said, HUD Associate Community Builder Faith Ballenger linked center operators with local partners. "Ours is a small office. You've got to remember that Montana is a very rural state." The size of the potential community is a factor in how a center should go about developing program support, Brinck said.

Key to the development of the computer program at Highland View Manor were resident interest and involvement as well as property management support. "They had a resident group and we worked with them. That's important because many of the [property] managers don't know where to start. We also found that some people do not know how, or want to, approach people to give them something. Ballenger was able to work with the resident council at the complex as well as explain Neighborhood Networks to the community."

The success of a program rests with residents, Brinck said. "My belief is that a program must be resident-driven. They have to clearly want the service and there has to be a nucleus of resident support."

HUD Neighborhood Networks NNewsline

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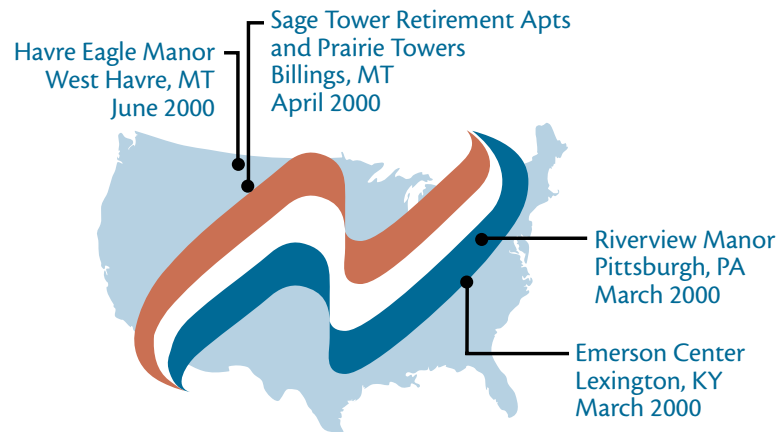
Original Design: Ruder Finn

NNewsline is published bimonthly by the Government Printing Office (GPO) through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Multifamily Housing. It is distributed to the HUD field offices and Neighborhood Networks centers and is made available to the public. For additional copies, please call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743. TTY: (703) 934-3230.



New Neighborhood Networks Centers

There are more than 600 Neighborhood Networks centers located in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing in all 50 states, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The newest centers to open are:



Visit our website at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Neighborhood Networks

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Fairfax, Virginia 22031

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